755 death was an early patient. The new witch-doctor applied his lips to her chest and appeared to suck out a dirty, rusty rag, a piece of wire, and a few pebbles, together with some blood (which he probably produced by biting his tongue).

The woman died; but all the people uttered loud exclamations of wonderment at the cleverness of the doctor, and a collection, [27K] chiefly of sticks of tobacco, was made to mark their approval of such distinguished surgical attainments. Similarly, when some youngsters had become entangled with a school of jelly fish while bathing in the Strait, one baby at least being quite unconscious, the old fellow performed his ritual, and collected, when the patients had all revived after treatment with ammonia by the mission fathers. Such are some of the trials and problems that have to be faced in dealing with the islanders.

622 And now we encountered Mariano. "This chap calls himself king," I was informed; "but nobody recognises his authority." Mariano was a fine, upstanding man, and he carried a bundle of many-pronged and gaily-painted spears. "Me king!" said Mariano to me as we came up. "Hullo, King!" said I, and Mariano proudly inflated his chest at this highly proper recognition of his royal status. But, if Mariano is not king, he is at 721 least a person of some importance. They had been holding a 727 war on the islands for the previous six months or so, and arrangements for the next battle were being held up pending Mariano's decision about a corroboree at which his presence was essential. At the moment he could not make up his mind to leave the mission station, so war and corroboree were both in abeyance.

WARS are of frequent occurrence on the islands. The current combat was in connexion with the possession of a very young lubra; but, since there had been only two casualties (one man had lost an eye, and another warrior had had a leg broken) in the six months, in all probability she will have died of old age before the matter is settled, unless, of course, the warriors tire of this as a pretext and come to some arrangement. Any old excuse is good enough to start a war. If nothing better offers, they get one up "Married v. Single." Father Gsell approves of the wars.

As he says, they are the only form of manly recreation that the islanders have. It is seldom that anyone is hurt, and the battles are rather in the nature of a somewhat dangerous cricket-match with fast leg-theory permitted and encouraged. A cleared space in the forest is necessary for a battle, and consequently the mission aerodrome is a favourite site for the usually bloodless encounters. When battle is raging there, it is necessary to give the excited small boys of the mission school a holiday. They join in, too, and have great fun throwing stones at their elders.

726 Each engagement of a war is conducted with due regard to ceremony. The opposing factions line up with the width of the chosen battlefield between them. Messengers from each side march out and meet half-way between the two forces and, formal arrangements being made, return majestically each to his own side. Then each army makes a fire, round which the warriors race with spears upheld, getting closer and closer in their frantic circlings. They leap through the flames, burning the hair from their legs, and finally the circle becomes so close that the excited warriors, regardless of hot coals, tramp the fire out. With a yell of defiance, spears are cast in the air as high as the warriors can throw them.

[p. 16(B)]